

COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN IN INDIA

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 has brought the world to its knees. For long, all the nations had been focusing on just the military aspect to showcase their strength. However, what it took was just a virus to show that what was wrong across the world- a broken public healthcare system. Pandemics are nothing new to the world, and it emphasises that the world is not prepared for one, neither now nor probably in the future.

It is quite evident with the economic slowdown faced across the world. The first lockdown in India was announced on 26th March 2020. The factories had closed, there is no sight of educational institutions being opened soon, and above all-the world-wide lockdown. Unfortunately, only the economic aspect of the lockdown has been focused by all the policymakers and world leaders. No one has paid attention to the social and cultural collateral damage caused due to this lockdown.

Nevertheless, the situation has improved as there have been relaxations made in the lockdown. After months, India started to reopen the economy of \$5 trillion. In the following months of nationwide lockdown, several factories and companies have started to open. The lockdown hit the country on several fronts. The unemployment rate has soared to double digits. Nevertheless, the most affected section of this whole process has been the country's 600 million [1] women, who are struggling as there are no proper policy guidelines in place to investigate their interest.

IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The world economy has taken a slump as it fell by 5%. However, the worst affected countries are the underdeveloped and developing countries. India is one of the worst-hit countries. In terms of a gender perspective, India has one of the worst statistics among the developing worlds. India ranks 112 out of the 153 countries, as per the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Index. [2] The index was created using the pre-pandemic data to evaluate the opportunities provided to both men and women. In other words, female participation in the labour force is one of the lowest in the world- among the bottom ten countries in terms of female participation. [3]

In the employment sector, which involves the maximum number of females in the labour force, it is either unpaid work or irregular work (unorganised sector). These kinds of employment have been the most vulnerable during the COVID-19 crises, resulting in an enormous workforce termination. Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) collected data, and according to its report, there have been severe job losses in India since the lockdown. [4]

As compared to the previous fiscal year concluding this year, March 2020, the employment average was a mere 70% in April 2020. Even the International Labour Organization has categorised the women workforce in India under the term "vulnerable employment." Even before the COVID-19, there was less than a quarter of the female participation in the workforce.

Due to COVID-19, more men than women are being paid in the workforce in India. As a result, in comparison to the average of the previous year, the total men who have reported losing their employment in April 2020, is more than the total women who have lost their jobs during the same period. It has also led to a steady decline in women participating in the paid labour force. It is not only that their participation was less, but they also tended to earn lesser than men. According to reports, Indian women, women earned 35% less for the same job than men, and it is 16% lesser than the global average. Not only that, but women also contribute 18% in the economic output, although they make up for almost half the population of the country. [5]

The pre-pandemic data highlights that the situation was terrible. Now, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in its aftermath, things would probably pile up from awful to worse. Small and upcoming ventures are the worst hit in the country. Even the Stanford Social Innovation Review report states about 40% of such companies are at the highest risk in low-income nations. [6] It will have an enormous impact on women, as about 13.8% of such businesses are either microenterprises or self-financed.

Already 4 out of 10 women have lost their jobs in India due to the pandemic. As per the research by the World Bank, about 12 million [7] Indians will be driven into poverty. Also, 17 million women have lost their jobs as compared to the 100 million jobs lost by men. Nevertheless, there was a drop in total men reporting themselves as employed by 29% between March 2019-20 and April 2020, compared to 39% of women. On the 17 million women who became jobless between March and April- 9 million are from rural areas, and from urban areas, the figure was estimated at 3 million— which escalated the unemployment rate for women both in the informal and formal sectors by about 30%. Also, in the rural area, it is the scheduled caste women who were affected the most. [8]

All these data underline that the COVID-19 will eventually lead to the feminisation of poverty in India. Women are at risk of a permanent exit from the labour market. One cannot predict whether jobs will be returned to the men or the women in the coming months. Thus, more women will be over-represented amidst the new poor in India. These developments will eventually have adverse effects on household well-being.

IMPACT ON HEALTHCARE AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Nonetheless, it does not mean that one will see a reduction in female participation in the labour force from all the sectors. If one goes by the statistics, females comprise 67% of the global health workers, even during the COVID-19 scenario. women lead 79% of frontline healthcare workers in the South-East Asian region. These are likely to have an immediate impact on the health workers due to COVID-19. However, there is still risk while treating the

patients. Unfortunately, it also leads to a lot of stress and burden on these female healthcare workers related to mental health.

The broken healthcare system elevates the risk for these health care workers. Even though it will have an impact on men, yet it will have more impact on women as they are in a higher proportion in the healthcare workforce. These health issues are surely not going to be addressed as the developing, and underdeveloped countries do not pay much heed to the available resources for women's health. It is evident with the Indian government's recent steps, which slashed its budget in this regard from 20% to 7%. [9]

Although one cannot deny that there are several households where the men also contribute, most of the homes, especially in lower-middle-class families, have different scenarios. Besides dealing with their significant contribution to the healthcare system, women are also significantly considered as household caregivers. It is widespread in the Asian community. The frontline workers like nurses, health workers, police and waste pickers are in most women. Now, with the lockdown families are mostly staying indoors due to the COVID-19.

To add it, the sudden announcement of a lockdown and the subsequent migration of the labours was a reason for relief. However, there are downfalls too, as wives who lived alone are now prone to suspicion, and, in the worst scenario, desertion. With the financial crisis increasing day by day, it may also lead to many men leave the family and settle down somewhere else, consequently increasing the number of single mothers left to fend for their children.

The household responsibilities have also inflated to a great extent. So, in these times, there is significantly less possibility for them to isolate themselves from the family as they are the ones who must take care of their children, which results in substantially less recreation. They would then have to face the ire for putting the family at risk. Another effect of the lockdown will be on the reproductive healthcare services such as family planning, maternal health, and abortion services that are always essential for women, be it in the urban areas or the rural areas. There have been severe restrictions on the supply chain due to the curbs on movement. [10]

It has also resulted in low availability of services due to fear of infection among patients and healthcare providers. So, even the access and the availability of essential services such as RMNCAH+N (Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child, Adolescent Health and Nutrition) became a huge challenge during mid-April. [11]

These are some of the reasons why there is a rising concern that the COVID-19 will reverse the overall progress made by the country in the past two decades to address new-born, child mortality, preventable maternal, and morbidity. After all, there are millions of couples who were unable to access abortion services, maternal health services and family planning services.

Thus, as per the estimates given by health experts, an increase in unintended pregnancies, childbirths, and maternal deaths is anticipated to rise due to the lack of supplies.[12]

Family planning services

In no small extent, there has been a compromise in the access and use of contraception in the country since the lockdown. Also, as per the advisory given by the orders given by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, public facilities had suspended the intra-uterine contraceptive devices (IUCDs) supplies and sterilisation services during the lockdown. [13]

Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India made many policy briefs, and it is estimated that due to the pandemic, contraceptive treatment will not be accessible to over 24.55 million couples in 2020. Also, even if the clinical family planning services start operating by the end of this year and the commercial sales of OTC contraceptives are by the next year in May, yet there will be problems to access contraception services to over 63 million couples. Even after the lockdown is lifted and the country moves towards complete normalcy, there will still be issues in the accessibility. Moreover, there will be an additional 679,864 childbirths, 1.45 million abortions (including 834,042 unsafe abortions), 38 million unintended pregnancies, and 1,743 maternal deaths. [14]

Maternal health

According to the recently released Global Financing Facility (GFF) [15] brief, there will be a lack of access to facility-based deliveries to over 4 million women due to the massive service disruption in India. As a result, in the upcoming year, there will be a 40% increase and a 52% increase in child mortality and maternal mortality in India. Also, several media reports are stating that during the lockdown, the process of institutional deliveries might have fallen by over 40%. More women have thus resorted to home birth. These data are mainly from states like in Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. [16] That is a significant reduction since an increase in institutional deliveries is one of the primary causes of child mortality and reduced maternal in recent decades in India.

Access to abortion services

There was a recent study [17] that was conducted by Ipas Development Foundation (IDF). It stated that in the three months following the lockdown, there was a tremendous impact on the access to abortion service in India. According to the reports, it is estimated that about 3.9 million abortions might have taken place during the lockdown. Furthermore, over 1.85 million of them never got the required abortion services. It is because both private and public sector facilities and chemist outlets were compromised. It is mainly taking place due to the supply chain disruption goods and services and drugs.

However, the situation can improve once the lockdown guidelines are further relaxed. So now, there is an added burden of household responsibilities on women while also dealing with problems in access to healthcare services. It will have a severe impact on both physical and mental health. All these aspects will eventually increase the physical and mental health issues of the women in India due to the COVID-19.

IMPACT ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

From having such a difficult situation at work to the added responsibility at home, there has also been a steady rise in gender-based violence within the household sphere. The lockdown has led to a shortage of tobacco and alcohol. It has pushed the men to an edge. Thus, they use the women as means of punching bags to unload their anger, be it through physical, verbal, or sexual assault, humiliation, intimidation, restriction to financial independence and movement, and controlling behaviour. These activities and actions will have a lasting event on the individuals. It will thus, have a severe impact on the mental health and the well-being of individuals.

The surge in violence due to COVID-19 has been affecting millions of women of all classes in India. Earlier, the reports of domestic violence were less due to seasonal migration by males for employment. However, mobility restrictions have made it terrible in the past few months. The National Commission of Women (NCW) stated that domestic violence complaints were steadily increasing and the same was reflective to the emails being received by the authorities. However, the registered number is still considered less as there are many complaints received via post, especially from those who do not have access to the internet. About 310 complaints of domestic violence and 885 complaints about other forms of violence against women were received by the NCW from 5th March - 5th April. Most of these cases dealt with domestic violence, such as polygamy, dowry deaths, bigamy, and harassment, to obtain dowry. [18]

The lockdown has put women in a situation where they are finding it difficult to reach to the outside world for help. Women are caged within their homes where there is a lack of exposure and opportunity, and the abuses increase as no one is there to intervene in the concerned situation. They are living with their abusers among the four walls. The addition, the restricted mobility and limited privacy have put the women in constant dangers of them abusers. Even those abusers know about the current situation and are taking undue advantage and using their powers of dominance over women in society. It is not like there were no cases of domestic violence against women and child abuse in the pre-COVID-19 era. However, the COVID-19 situation has only magnified the problem.

The crisis is a mirror, that is the magnifying social status of the women in Indian society - the inequalities, discrimination, oppressions faced by the women, the privileges given to the men and the existing patriarchy in the Indian community. The already existing male-dominated hierarchy that was layering the society is now in plain sight. The overall progress that was made by the Indian society is now being pushed back due to the COVID-19. The most affected women belong to the lower section of the society and are already economically and socially disempowered.

One needs to take into consideration that these recorded cases do not represent all the incidents that are taking place in the country and thus do not provide us with the actual proportion of the increase in domestic violence. It is because several women in different parts of the country still do not have access to mobile phones, nor have the freedom, time, and space to call for help.

According to the data from the National Family Health Survey, it reveals that 42% of men and 52% of women believe that it is justified for husbands to beat their wife in several situations. It varies from not serving hot food, disobeying the husband or the in-laws or not taking care of the children. To add to it, less than 1% of the victims seek help from police. It emphasises that the roots of domestic violence are present in power and control. It is challenging for women to find support from both community and immediate family members if they face domestic violence in their marital homes. Although some parental homes are willing to get involved in such tensions in the family, yet it is becoming difficult to get easy access during the lockdown. [19]

Furthermore, the COVID-19 has led to the marginalisation of violence that has become difficult to contain. During the lockdown, abusers know that since there is a lack of support to women during this time, they ferociously abuse women. Patriarchy is a means of dehumanising women. Furthermore, the lockdown has made it worse as it has increased the cases of men from ill-treating the women, nor it could deter men from displaying their sense of entitlements and privileges or from asserting their prerogative to abuse women in the home.

In the post-COVID-19 era, the government needs to prioritise in dealing with domestic violence against women. The Indian government has so far overlooked the need for formalising the integration of domestic violence and its resulting mental health repercussions in the public health guidelines and response plan during the COVID-19. Although there has been an aggressive nationwide campaign by the NCBI to promote awareness about domestic violence, yet there are many people who are still hesitant to come forward and file a complaint.

Apart from government organisations, even the national news channels, radio channels, and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and others can be strategically used. It will be like how the government used them to advocate hand washing and physical distancing, among many other methods to combat COVID-19.

The society needs to be sensitised towards the increasing cases of domestic violence, not only that, even the neighbours and bystanders should be encouraged to intervene in the situation by empowering them and making them aware of the existing laws. The witnesses should intervene if they suspect any abuse and alert the concerned authorities for help. Above all, the provision for keeping the identity of the witness hidden if they choose to report a case would be more helpful.

Some countries like France and Spain have adopted some other sophisticated methods to deal with domestic violence. The pharmacies in these countries are underway in the process where they are being trained to identify people facing abuse. [20] They use code words, such as asking for 'mask 19' to people.

Another reason for domestic violence is due to keeping the alcohol shops open during the lockdown. Despite the increased incidences of domestic violence in the red, orange, and green zones, the shops were not closed by the authorities, the government ignored the signs and allowed the shops to be opened. [21]

Alcohol is a significant source of revenue for state governments. With the lockdown, even the economic activities had to be halted to prevent the spreading of COVID-19. Nonetheless,

alcohol consumption was prioritised for profit, both by the government and even the Supreme Court. The apparent refusal to stay the sale of liquor focused on the economy and the GDP over crimes associated with it which threatened the welfare of the people. The subsequent toxic masculinity came out in the open when the liquor shops were opened.

Within a day, there were reports from several states of wives being abused by their alcoholic husbands. One of the cases that were most highlighted was a woman who was reportedly killed by her husband in UP because she refused to sell her jewellery to buy alcohol. The patriarchal state continued to act in an insensitive and gender-blind manner to the plight of women.

Not just the government, there are various NGOs as well who are working on this issue and helping many women during the COVID-19. They are also providing them with assistance. There are other organisations as well that are working on providing easy access to counselling, 24×7 shelter needs, medical assistance, legal aid, and so on. Therefore, civil society organisations, mental health organisations, counsellors, and others need to support the government to combat domestic violence during COVID-19 as much as possible.

IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

The Indian government is taking many steps to curb the COVID-19 spread. The economic slowdown has adversely affected both the production and distribution systems in the urban and rural areas. Consequently, food security has been threatened in several regions in India. Lower the access to food and market, more the effect on the women's nutrition well-being. In developing countries like India, women get a meagre share in the intrahousehold distribution of resources. Moreover, it is very likely for women to have inadequate food and nutrition when household resources are reduced. It is because women are the ones who eat at last.

With the fall in income, gender inequality in food security will further increase. Subsequently, short-term malnutrition will also increase. In due course, poor health will prevent women from returning to the labour market and government work schemes. It will lead to a vicious cycle of poverty among the low section of the society. The shutdown of the informal sector that constituted a significant proportion of women has already put their financial independence in jeopardy. With these developments as well, it will lead to further marginalisation of women in Indian society.

IMPACT ON ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION

To add to these, are the footprints of COVID-19, the unequal access to technology in India that will have a significant repercussion on education as well. It is a massive setback to the Indian government's efforts, which has been, for long, trying to cover the gender gap in education. It was only in recent times that there was an increase in the literacy and enrolment of females. It is indeed a sign of progress since independence. Regretfully, the COVID-19 has been undoing years of growth.

With the COVID-19 pandemic bringing the country to a halt, all educational institutions had to be closed. Simultaneously, classroom education shifted through digitalisation. However, there is a vast discrepancy in accessing the technology by women in proportion to men. It is estimated that about 10 million women will drop out of school due to the pandemic. Not only that, only 33% of women in urban areas and 28% of women in rural areas have proper access to technology.

In lower-income households, there is generally limited to only one smartphone. So, the needs and requirements of a boy will always triumph over that of the girl child. There has been an improvement in terms of better access to schools for girls living in rural areas. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 has created a digital divide amongst genders across the country. So, the girls are less likely to have access to technology for remote learning in rural areas.

According to a report, [22] four factors are the reason for the obstruction to girls' education in the country — school nutrition, access to schools, disruptions in funding, and unemployment rates.

Factor 1: Mid-Day Meal Scheme

The mid-day meal scheme was introduced in 1995 in government schools. It was a means of incentive to send children to schools which helped in reducing gender gaps in education. It solved both the purpose of education and nourishment to the children. In fact, according to the estimations by economists Dreze and Kingdon, the mid-day meals increased the chances of completion of primary school education by girls by 30% and the unenrolled proportion of girls reduced by 50%.

However, the lockdown announcement due to COVID-19 situation has pushed back this progress. It has affected this perk of free meals. Without these perks, families may decide against sending their daughters to school, resulting in higher dropout rates and lesser re-enrolment. Taking suo moto cognisance, the Supreme Court ordered the state governments to provide for lunch meals, although only a few states followed this mandate.

In some states like Kerala, teachers of the Anganwadi schools are delivering packed foods daily to the homes of students. Other states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, and J&K are providing dry rations to the families. On the other hand, the Central government has increased the funding of the Mid-day meal scheme by 11% and has issued guidelines for all State governments to ensure safety in the mid-day meal distribution.

Factor 2: Access to Schools

Long distances between school and the home and the possibility of harassment and eve-teasing during travel is a source of fear that deters families from sending girls to schools. Nonetheless, there has been a drastic improvement in the situation. In the past seven decades, 96% of the rural population got access to primary schools within a range of 1 km. It has helped to improve the enrolment of girls at the primary level.

Factor 3: Return to Education

From 2000-2012, over 4.5 million jobs were taken by women in services- it is approximately an overall increase in women's employment during this period. With only 23% of working-age women in the formal and informal labour force, the economic crisis created by COVID-

19 will have a feminised impact. It will reduce the possibility of women returning to education and employment.

Factor 4: Policy

Priority Education policy has become more comprehensive and evolved with time. While the latest policy framework is the National Policy for Women 2016, with the oldest policy framework being the National Committee on Women's Education 1958. For decades, providing access to education to girls has been a consistent effort by various governments through government schemes.

However, the COVID-19 has led to excessive expenditure and a cut in revenue generation activity. The government is forced to reshuffle its funds. Over the past four years, nearly one-third of the corporate social responsibility (CSR), which was contributed for educational purposes. However, there is no reduction in financial investments in girl education, as all the CSR funds are being diverted for the pandemic response.

Furthermore, there has been an increasing problem in Indian society on access to technology for educational purposes based on gender. Due to the COVID-19, there has been a complete lockdown around the world. Due to the social distancing norms, the classes are now being held online. It has created exacerbating inequalities that are prevalent as gender-biased.

According to the research by the Harvard Kennedy School in 2018, women in India are systematically denied access to technology. Be it mobile phones or access to any other electronic devices as they are mainly owned and controlled by the men of the house. The internet is only accessible to 33% of women in urban areas and 28% women in rural areas. [23]

In comparison to 71% of men, approximately only 38% of women own a mobile phone. In such a situation, there will be access to information and communication technology (ICT) within the household that will be gender biased. It will limit the abilities and capabilities of girls during this time of home-schooling.

It will have more impact on girls, especially from the lower-income society, because now, with the financial situation of families going downhill, they would be more engaged in casual or unpaid care work to support the families. It would make it difficult for those girls to return to school. So, the philanthropists and the various state and central government need to work on this area once the COVID-19 situation gets in control.

Philanthropists and the various state and central government must make sure that there should be no reduction in financial support towards girl's education in future. There is a need to increase the expenditure from 3% to 6% in the gross domestic product (GDP) for the year 2018-19. It will ensure that the funding for girl's education directly reaches at least 50% of the overall educational expenditure.

Although Rs.500 is being provided monthly by the Central government under the Jan Dhan Yojana, there can be some additional support as well that can be provided. Providing free training skills to women who have lost jobs due to the COVID-19 would empower them with a new set of skills that will help them find suitable jobs—providing free skills in government/aided schools till the age of 18 by utilising the funds from Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme. Furthermore, women in the MSME sector can be provided with wage

subsidies that will help them support payments. Most significantly, maternity benefits can be extended, that will encourage more women to take jobs.

Also, the government now needs to work on the overall new possible framework of education that will involve both digital and physical learning. It will most probably remain in place even after education institutions reopen. The recent initiative of PM e-VIDYA, a platform on the internet that includes multi-media access, distribution of electronic gadgets in neglected region and digitalisation of textbooks by the State government is good.

However, the Central government now needs to prioritise digital infrastructure investment in rural areas. It can be done through a public-private partnership to ensure that Wi-Fi connectivity reaches all households by 2021. also, under the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme, free mobile plans can be provided in the girl student name, especially in the rural districts.

In other words, the government and all the other stakeholders need to adopt a policy framework in future that involves looking at it through the gender optic lens. It is urgent to recognise the risks faced by girl education due to the COVID-19, and it is essential to design educational guidelines to accommodate the recent changes. It will thus, help the efforts of the stakeholders to pull back girl child education and status of women in the society up by several decades.

CONCLUSION

If things must change in the post-COVID-19 era, then several steps need to be taken that would help in improving the situation in the employment sector for the women. The most important is for the respective state governments to set up awareness campaigns for people to have a positive attitude towards women joining the workforce, especially when the country is plagued by social orthodox that has been one of the hurdles in women's participation in economic activities.

Another move could be the opening of crèches in towns and cities by the local bodies who receive financial aid from state governments. Not only will it support the women to join the workforce, but it will also increase employment opportunities. Even self-help groups could help in bringing a positive change at the grass-root level. It would improve women's access to the formal banking sector that generally prevents women from joining the labour force. Thus, more gender-neutral formalisation is needed in policymaking. There are various legislations for the formal sector, and women will be able to avail those benefits if they get employment in the formal sector.

Also, reforms in the infrastructural improvement and other obstructions in job creation would allow more labour force participation. Also, there needs to be more allocation of revenues into the social sectors, which includes the educational sector that will directly result in more participation of female in the labour force in future. Although social rules and norms play a huge role in Indian society, yet the legislations and the policies by the Indian government in terms of the economic trends can help a lot.

In other words, apart from initiatives like Make in India, Skill India, and others, and some gender-based initiatives would also help a lot. Women should also be given vocational training as it will provide them with skills that will help raise the participation of the female in the labour force. However, heavy investment participation of the skill training and job support is necessary.

These problems are prevalent and are getting worse as most of the governments do not keep into consideration the gender aspect during the process of policymaking, economic initiatives, or infrastructural development. Women are not playing any central role in these crucial areas. [24]

With the COVID-19 lockdown, the situation has got worse. Even if lockdown is lifted, there is a possibility that all those jobs lost by women during a pandemic will not be returned to them. It is because either the men will take those jobs or the overall job will be wiped off from the market. Women will still have to compromise with lesser salaries and inferior work, even if they get their jobs back.

So far, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 is a scheme run by the government so that work can be distributed among the poor. However, even under this flagship scheme, women are not getting good jobs. Now, with the economic situation looming in the country, it will be even harder for them to find jobs in the present scenario and the near future.

Overall, the decline in female workforce participation in India would lead to a considerable loss. If there is a rise in female participation in the workforce, India will have the potential to grow to have to still compromise with its GDP by \$700 billion by 2025. [25]

There are several social gains, as well. Employed women will have financial independence and will also have higher opportunities to enjoy tremendous respect and help in uplifting their position within their families.

Thus, neglecting women is an opportunity missed for India. Stakeholders need to work on women impacted by COVID-19 for the betterment of the economy and society. [26]

REFERENCES

- [1] Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India. *Women and Men in India (A Statistical Compilation of Gender Related Indicators in India) 2018*. 2018, www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Women%20and%20Men%20%20in%20India%202018.pdf.
- [2] Forum, World Economic. *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*. 2020, www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf.
- [3] *Countries Ranked by Labor Force Participation Rate, Female (% of Female Population Ages 15+) (Modeled ILO Estimate)*, www.indexmundi.com/facts/indicators/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS/rankings
- [4] Vyas, Mahesh. "Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd." *CMIE*, 2020, www.cmie.com/kommon/bin/sr.php?kall=warticle&dt=2020-05-05%2008:22:21&msec=776
- [5] Beniwal, Vrishti. "'India's Painful Shecession': Coronavirus Impact Worsens Gender Gap." *NDTV.com*, NDTV, 27 June 2020, www.ndtv.com/india-news/coronavirus-impact-worsens-gender-gap-indias-painful-shecession-2253037.
- [6] Guttentag, Matthew, et al. "How Funders Can Help Save an Economic Engine of the Developing World (SSIR)." *Stanford Social Innovation Review: Informing and Inspiring Leaders of Social Change*, 12 May 2020, ssir.org/articles/entry/how_funders_can_help_save_an_economic_engine_of_the_developing_world.
- [7] Mahler, Daniel Gerszon, et al. "The Impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) on Global Poverty: Why Sub-Saharan Africa Might Be the Region Hardest Hit." *World Bank Blogs*, 20 Apr. 2020, blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/impact-covid-19-coronavirus-global-poverty-why-sub-saharan-africa-might-be-region-hardest.
- [8] S, Rukmini. "How Covid-19 Locked out Women from Jobs." *Mint*, 10 June 2020, www.livemint.com/news/india/how-covid-19-locked-out-women-from-jobs-11591772350206.html.
- [9] Swain, Shubh. "Opinion: Impact of Covid-19 on Women in Developing Nations Will Be Harsher." *Mint*, 22 Apr. 2020, www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/opinion-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-in-developing-nations-will-be-harsher-11587570543867.html.
- [10] Bedi, Aneesha. "Pregnancy in a Pandemic - Lockdown Triggers Anxiety, Doctors Advise Patience and Caution." *ThePrint*, 18 Apr. 2020, theprint.in/india/pregnancy-in-a-pandemic-lockdown-triggers-anxiety-doctors-advise-patience-and-caution/402942/

- [11] *Guidance Note on Provision of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health Plus Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) Services during & Post COVID-19 Pandemic.* www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/GuidanceNoteonProvisionofessentialRMNCAHNServices24052020.pdf.
- [12] “COVID-19 Baby Boom? India Expected to Have the Highest Number of Births This Year - Times of India.” *The Times of India*, The Times of India, 7 May 2020, timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/parenting/pregnancy/covid-19-baby-boom-india-expected-to-have-the-highest-number-of-births-this-year/articleshow/75602754.cms
- [13] NewIndianXpress. “COVID-19 Lockdown Deprives over 2 Crore Couples from Availing Contraceptives.” *The New Indian Express*, The New Indian Express, 9 May 2020, www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/may/09/covid-19-lockdown-deprives-over-2-crore-couples-from-availing-contraceptives-2141234.html.
- [14] Chandrashekar, V.S, and Ankur Sagar. *Impact of COVID 19 on India’s Family Planning Program*. May 2020, www.frhsi.org.in/images/impact-of-covid-19-on-indias-family-planning-program-policy-brief.pdf.
- [15] *Preserve Essential Health Services during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. 2020, idronline.org/user-content/uploads/2020/06/India-Covid-Brief_GFF.pdf.
- [16] Ghose, Dipankar. “Institutional Deliveries Dip in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand.” *The Indian Express*, 28 May 2020, indianexpress.com/article/india/coronavirus-lockdown-institutional-deliveries-dip-in-chhattisgarh-jharkhand-6432219/.
- [17] “COVID-19 Compromised Access to 18.5 Lakh Abortions: Study.” *The Indian Express*, 9 June 2020, indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/covid-19-lockdown-pandemic-women-abortions-compromised-study-6449873/.
- [18] “Statistical Overview of Complaints.” 2020, *National Commission for Women*, 164.100.58.238/frmComp_Stat_Overview.aspx.
- [19] Menon, Vandana. “52% Indian Women Think It's Ok for Their Husbands to Beat Them. Only 42% Men Agree.” *ThePrint*, 18 Jan. 2018, theprint.in/india/governance/more-women-than-men-think-wife-beating-is-justified/29808/.
- [20] Kottasová, Ivana. “Women Are Using Code Words at Pharmacies to Escape Domestic Violence.” *CNN*, Cable News Network, 6 Apr. 2020, edition.cnn.com/2020/04/02/europe/domestic-violence-coronavirus-lockdown-intl/index.html.
- [21] Bose, Rakhi. “No Social Distancing, More Domestic Abuse: Alcohol Shops May Save Economy but Put Many at Risk.” *News18*, 4 May 2020, www.news18.com/news/buzz/no-social-distancing-more-domestic-abuse-alcohol-shops-may-save-economy-but-put-many-at-risk-2605157.html.

- [22] Nikore, Mitali. "Covid Classrooms: India Could Lose Progress Made On Girls' Education: Forbes India Blog." *Forbes India*, ForbesIndia, 13 July 2020, www.forbesindia.com/blog/gender-parity/covid-classrooms-india-could-lose-progress-made-on-girls-education/.
- [23] Barboni, Giorgia, et al. *A Tough Call: Understanding Barriers to and Impacts of Women's Mobile Phone Adoption in India*. Oct. 2018, epod.cid.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/2018-10/A_Tough_Call.pdf.
- [24] Wenham, Clare, et al. *COVID-19: the Gendered Impacts of the Outbreak*. 6 Mar. 2020, [www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30526-2/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30526-2/fulltext).
- [25] Bhandare, Namita. "India Could Add 60% to 2025 GDP by Bridging Gender Gap at Work: McKinsey." *Mint*, 24 Sept. 2015, www.livemint.com/Politics/vGSjSt72LCVC6sRYezfFxM/India-could-add-60-to-2025-GDP-by-bridging-gender-gap-at-wo.html.
- [26] Guterres, António. "'The Pandemic Is Exposing and Exploiting Inequalities of All Kinds, Including Gender Inequality.'" *United Nations*, United Nations, 30 Apr. 2020, www.un.org/en/un-coronavirus-communications-team/pandemic-exposing-and-exploiting-inequalities-all-kinds-including.